UNDERGROUND WORK

I DID not last long in underground work. Following the advice of party experts in conspiracy, I had dyed my hair black but I failed to retouch it often enough and it soon became reddish at the roots. Any spy could see at a glance that something was wrong. Things would not have been better, however, if I had been a first-rate conspirator. The secret police had their agent in the heart of the Ekaterinoslav organization.

In the city the Mensheviks predominated among the workers on the railroad and in the flour mills and among Jewish craftsmen; the Bolsheviks had a well-equipped printing shop and good contacts among the intellectuals. I managed to persuade both groups that the party was too weak to afford the luxury of factional squabbles. When all the remaining S-D cells had been merged, we decided to launch a four-page monthly tabloid, *The South Russian Worker*. Later on we would send our men to other southern cities and organize a regional conference.

The S-D workers of Ekaterinoslav were delighted to see the intellectuals ready to work together. I remember a meeting of the S-D cell in the railroad repair shop. A middle-aged, sedate, bald-headed man was particularly enthusiastic. Beaming all over, he repeated, "This is wonderful. Now we can organize our organization."

The secretary whispered to me, "One of our best men. Not too bright, but reliable as gold. He has not missed a single meeting."

This golden man was the agent of the secret police.

An editorial committee was appointed, the topics for the first issue of the newspaper were parceled out among contributors—half of them Mensheviks, half Bolsheviks—but since none of them could write, I had to fill all four pages except for a piece of poetry and local news.

The secretary, Alexandrova, told me that Misha, the boy who ran our secret printing shop, wished to see me. The next day I met him at Alexandrova's home. He was a skinny boy with a pale, almost transparent face and big sad eyes. He handed me the galleys of my articles. Without wasting time, I took a pencil and started to correct them.

"Are there any errors?" the boy asked timidly.

"Of course," I replied. "Galleys are supposed to have errors."

"That is because of the poor light," he said. "I did not recheck them." His beautiful eyes filled with tears. He looked like a hurt child.